magnificent day in August of 1963. Although the Supreme Court struck down the coverage formula in the Shelby County case, the Justices acknowledged, as they must and as the American people recognize, that discrimination in voting continues to be a problem. As the Chief Justice rightly noted in the majority opinion, ''voting discrimination still exists; no one doubts that.'' The question only remains how best to protect Americans against this discrimination.

This is an issue on which Republicans and Democrats have always come together on. Every reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, including its initial passage, has been marked by the overwhelming support of lawmakers of both parties. In the last few weeks, I have heard people say that Congress is too gridlocked and will not act on voting rights. That is wrong and it is unsupported by our tradition of leadership on this issue. As my friend Senator GRASSLEY said at the Senate Judiciary Committee voting rights hearing I chaired 2 weeks ago, ''Cynicism and defeatism have never before characterized reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act.'' Senator GRASSLEY is right. History shows that we have reauthorized the act time and again because it is a nonpartisan issue.

Those who forecast failure also underestimate what a person like JOHN LEWIS can accomplish. I, for one, would never underestimate JOHN LEWIS's tenacity and ability to bring people together.

The Supreme Court's ruling last month was a setback to the cause of equality. However, we should see it as a calling for Congress to come together to meet the voting discrimination which persists with a steadfast resolve. It is up to us to meet this challenge. We must work together as a Congress—not as Democrats or Republicans, but as Americans—to ensure that we protect against racial discrimination in voting. We can only do that with a strong Voting Rights Act.

Earlier today, at the bipartisan and bicameral event marking the 50th Anniversary of the March on Washington in Statuary Hall, JOHN LEWIS said, ''We have come a great distance but we are not finished yet.'' I could not agree more. Let us continue to work to protect the fundamental right to vote for all Americans.

Ms. MIKULSKI. Mr. President, I rise today to speak on an important anniversary in our country. In just a few weeks, we will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the famous March on Washington. On August 28, 1963, we marched. We marched for jobs, for justice, for the economy, and for freedom.

I remember that march. I was getting ready to go back to school. Baltimore was a staging location, and many social workers helped as marchers came down from New York and Pennsylvania. These determined individuals—a diverse group—all with a story and a cause, made up the nearly 250,000 people who marched that day. It was an important testament to the power of a collective voice, one in support of equal rights and treatment of all. And it was this collective voice that helped lead to the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act.

We have had many victories, and made much progress in ensuring equality for all. We have elected a Black President to the White House, passed the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, repealed DOMA and Don't Ask Don't Tell. We have accomplished so much, but we still have so far to go. The fight for civil rights is far from over. Racial, religious and gender violence continues in our streets and in our homes. Voters rights have been threatened by the recent Supreme Court decision, leaving Americans vulnerable to prejudice and intimidation. And so we find ourselves, 50 years later, fighting many of the same fights.

We need to reclaim that bill of rights, and not let any court decision take it away from us. They are chopping away at the Voting Rights Act, but let's change the law if we have to. Let us march for our liberties and the people who were there, and said ''ain't I a man'', later calling on the words ''ain't I a woman''.

So it is important now more than ever to hold that dream of Dr. King in our hearts. Let's remember the history that was written here 50 years ago. And just as we marched then, we need to march today. Together we can end injustice. Together we can break down barriers to equality, so that all people regardless of race, faith or gender can live in a country that never promised anything less than their undeniable rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

SERVICEMEMBER STUDENT LOAN AFFORDABILITY ACT

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, we've made a lot of progress over the past couple weeks helping our Nation's students borrow at reasonable costs for their higher education needs. This year alone, students are projected to borrow $21 million in federal student loans. Borrowers currently carry about $1.1 trillion in student loan debt.

Several Federal programs help borrowers having trouble keeping up with student loan debt. Two programs in particular are designed to recognize the sacrifice made by those who serve our country—whether it's in the military or through public service.

The Servicemember Civil Relief Act protects our servicemembers from interest rates above 6% on all loans—including student loans taken out preservice—while they are on active duty. The Public Service Loan Forgiveness program encourages people to become public servants by forgiving student loan debt after 10 years of public service—including military service. Under this program borrowers must enroll in a qualifying repayment plan and make 10 years of payments while working in public service before the loan is forgiven.

To be eligible, borrowers with Perkins or Federal Family Education Loans must consolidate their loans into a Direct Consolidation Loan to be eligible for the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. However, there's an unintended consequence at play here.

Once a servicemember consolidates his or her preservice loans to qualify for the Loan Forgiveness program, those loans no longer qualify for the 6 percent rate cap under the Servicemember Civil Relief Act. This is because consolidation or refinancing of old debt is considered a new loan under the Servicemember Civil Relief Act.

Unfortunately, this forces servicemembers to choose between the 6 percent rate cap now while they are on active duty and enrolling in a program that will forgive their loans after 10 years of service and steady payments. Furthermore, this quirk in the law prevents servicemembers from taking advantage of historically low interest rates by refinancing. A lower interest rate could save borrowers thousands of dollars over the life of the loan.

Congress' intent was to help servicemembers burdened with student loan debt, and the Servicemember Civil Relief Act and the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Programs have done that. But forcing servicemembers to give up the rate cap today for a chance to earn loan forgiveness in the future is not what Congress intended, and we should fix it.

This week I introduced the Servicemember Student Loan Affordability Act. This bill would allow preservice private or Federal student loan debt to be consolidated or refinanced while retaining the 6 percent rate cap. This tweak to the law would allow servicemembers to participate in both beneficial programs. My bill is supported by the:

Center for Responsible Lending, National Consumer Law Center, National Guard Association of the United States, NGAUS, the Retired Enlisted Association, TREA, Veterans of Foreign Wars VFW, and Woodstock Institute.

We have made substantial progress for students in recent weeks, and more work is ahead as we address the rising student loan debt. This is a small change to the law, but it will have a big impact on servicemembers with large student loan debt. Congress continues to try to address the financial challenges facing our nation's middle class, working families, and students. This fix is one of many steps toward that effort.

I urge my colleagues to consider a simple solution to help servicemembers, and I hope they will support the Servicemember Student Loan Affordability Act.

TRIBUTE TO DAVID F. VITE

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am honored today to pay tribute to my

friend David Vite on his retirement from the Illinois Retail Merchants Association, IRMA. He spent 35 years with the Illinois retailers, helping businesses across the State of Illinois engage with government and better serve their communities.

David has a long history of service. After serving in the Army, he went to college in Wisconsin and graduated from the University of Wisconsin at LaCrosse. This must be where he developed his affinity for the Green Bay Packers. In all of the time David spent in Illinois, he never adopted our very own Chicago Bears. He remains to this day a loyal Packers fan.

Early in his career, David became the Executive Director of the Woodstock Chamber of Commerce and oversaw community developments in Woodstock, IL. By 1978, David had joined the Illinois Retail Merchants Association as a field representative. Within 3 years, the Association had promoted him to Vice President of Government Affairs and not long after that, David Vite took over as President.

As President, David was determined to help resolve the challenges facing Illinois retailers and at the same time to create opportunities for them. He provided training for his members to help them promote sales. He created a school-to-work training program to help cultivate the next generation of retail leaders. He led an effort to publish a manual to help merchants become more environmentally friendly. And throughout his tenure, he was the voice for business as Illinois policymakers addressed dilemmas in unemployment insurance, worker's compensation, and sales taxes.

I can't thank David enough for the support he helped build across Illinois for the Marketplace Fairness Act. I am proud to say that in May, the Senate passed this bill by a vote of 69–27, helping to level the playing field for retailers in Illinois and across the country. With David's help, we were able to communicate with retailers in every corner of Illinois to better understand the need and urgency for tax fairness legislation.

I would like to thank David for his leadership and many contributions over his decades of work with communities and business. Illinois retail has been lucky to have had such a strong, good-willed advocate. I wish him the very best in his retirement.

CLEAN CRUISE SHIP ACT OF 2013

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week, I introduced the Clean Cruise Ship Act to limit the dumping of wastewater by cruise ships.

Cruise ships generate millions of gallons of wastewater every day, and currently these ships can dump their waste directly into the oceans with minimal oversight.

The Clean Cruise Ship Act would require these ships to obtain permits through EPA's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System to be able to discharge sewage, graywater, and bilge water.

It also would require cruise ships to upgrade their wastewater treatment systems to meet the standards of today's best available technology. This technology significantly reduces the pollutants that ships discharge and is already being used successfully on some cruise ships.

The problem is real. The number of cruise ship passengers has been growing nearly twice as fast as any other mode of travel.

In the U.S. alone, cruise lines carried over 10 million passengers in 2011, with some ships carrying 8,000 passengers or more.

These ships produce massive amounts of waste: one ship can produce over 200,000 gallons, or 10 backyard swimming pools, of sewage each week; a million gallons of graywater from kitchens, laundry, and showers; and over 25,000 gallons of oily bilge water that collects in ship bottoms.

I have nothing against cruise vacations. They can be a wonderful way to visit many beautiful places.

In fact, it is because these ships sail often into these beautiful, sensitive environments that we need to be particularly careful of the pollution they release into those waters.

Here is the unpleasant reality. Within 3 miles of shore, vessels can discharge wastewater from toilets and showers into the ocean provided that a ''marine sanitation device'' is installed.

However, a 2008 report released by the Environmental Protection Agency concluded that these systems simply do not work.

The devices allow ships to discharge waste that consistently exceeds national effluent standards for fecal coliform and other pathogens and pollutants.

In fact, fecal coliform levels in effluent are typically 20 to 200 times greater than in untreated domestic wastewater.

While cruise ships must obtain permits to discharge graywater within 3 miles of the coast, graywater should not go directly into the sea.

Graywater from sinks, tubs, and kitchens contain large amounts of pathogens and pollutants.

Fecal coliform concentrations, for example, are 10 to 1,000 times greater than those in untreated domestic wastewater.

These pollutants sicken our marine ecosystems, wash up onto our beaches, and contaminate food and shellfish that end up on our dinner plates.

Even worse, beyond 3 miles from shore there are no restrictions on sewage or graywater discharge. Cruise ships can actually dump raw sewage directly into U.S. waters.

The Clean Cruise Ship Act seeks to address these practices.

No discharges would be allowed within 12 miles of shore.

Beyond 12 miles from shore, discharges of sewage, graywater, and bilge water would be allowed, provided that they meet national effluent limits consistent with the best available technology. That technology works and is commercially available now.

Under this legislation, the release of raw, untreated sewage would be banned. No dumping of sewage sludge and incinerator ash would be allowed in U.S. waters.

All cruise ships calling on U.S. ports would have to dispose of hazardous waste in accordance with the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.

The bill would establish inspection and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance.

The protection of U.S. waters is vital to our nation's health and economy. The oceans support the life of nearly 50 percent of all species on Earth.

Some cruise ship companies already are trying to improve their environmental footprint. They also want to preserve the environment—it is the natural beauty of the sea that attracts their passengers.

But the efforts between cruise ship companies are not uniform. A federal standard would apply one set of requirements to all companies.

It is time to bring the cruise ship industry into the 21st century. It is time to update the laws that protect our oceans and urge adoption of the best available wastewater treatment technology at sea.

Working together, we can support the industry while protecting the natural treasures that are our oceans. The approach taken in the Clean Cruise Ship Act will move us toward that goal.

I encourage my colleagues here in the Senate to work with me to pass legislation that will put a stop to the dumping of hazardous pollutants along our coasts. Together we can clean up this major source of pollution that is harming our waters.

REMEMBERING DR. JOHN M. SMITH JR.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise to pay tribute to an honored Kentuckian who, sadly, has been lost to us after a long and fruitful life. The man I speak of is Dr. John M. Smith Jr. of Beattyville, KY. Born in Hazard, KY, in 1922, he passed away on June 15 of this year. He was 91 years old.

Dr. Smith was revered in his community as a man of medicine. In the 1940s, he was one of the first recipients of the Rural Kentucky Medical Scholarship Fund, and graduated from the University of Louisville School of Medicine in 1949. He has worked in Morehead, Lexington, Woodford County, and most of all in Beattyville, where he served as a general practitioner for 38 years until the age of 90. Generations of Beattyville-area Kentuckians knew and loved Dr. Smith as their primary-care doctor.